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## Greenville County a 'shining example' of how to handle taxpayers' funds

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State Treasurer Converse Chellis said Tuesday that Greenville County's financial management – a budget surplus and no new taxes – is a “shining example” of good government during challenging economic times.

“There is absolutely no question that Greenville County has been a very **responsible** steward of the taxpayers' money,” Chellis said in Greenville, where he presented county officials with the treasurer's award for financial excellence.

The county's budget surplus in the last fiscal year despite an overall decline in revenue didn't go unnoticed, Chellis said. “This is a great example of how a pay-as-you-go fiscal philosophy can work,” he said.

He said the county had the foresight to build its financial reserves as protection against an economic downturn, and he cited the county's low debt burden. The county also has maintained a coveted AAA bond rating from **credit agencies** at a time that ratings for governments are slipping across the nation, he said.

Greenville County has maintained, Chellis said, “a consistent level of services while instituting no new taxes in years.”

“The state of South Carolina could take a lesson from the way Greenville County handles its money,” Chellis said, referring to the state's struggles to balance its budget.

Chellis praised the County Council and administrators for their planning and teamwork with other county officials, including Treasurer Jill Kintigh and Auditor Scott Case, a former council member.

County Council Vice Chairman Bob Taylor, who chairs the council's Finance Committee, said county and state governments can successfully meet their financial challenges “if they're willing to bite the bullet and make the tough decisions.”

“In some cases, it's just a matter of saying ‘no, we don't have money to spend on certain things’ to try to keep government on target as to what government's really supposed to do,” Taylor said.

County Administrator Joe Kernell told County Council last month that the county, in the first year of its biennium budget, posted a \$328,000 surplus.

Overall revenue was down about 2 percent from what was budgeted, but through cost-cutting and other measures the county spent about 3 percent less than what was budgeted, Kernell recently told *The Greenville News*.

Property-tax collections, the county's largest single revenue source, were down about \$1.5 million, according to county figures.

Still, Kernell told council members the county was able to add \$537,000 to the county's fund balance, a surplus that now stands at about \$48 million.

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